



The background of the book cover features a collage of three distinct scenes. On the left, a row of traditional mud-brick buildings with arched doorways and windows, with several people in traditional Hausa attire walking in front. In the center, a pastoral scene with a man herding cattle across a grassy plain under a clear sky. On the right, a modern interior view of a simple dwelling with a thatched roof, a doorway, and some household items on the floor.

BEYOND THE HAUSA-FULANI MYTH

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HAUSA AND FULANI: UNTANGLING A MISUNDERSTOOD RELATIONSHIP AND THE REALITY OF VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

For decades, outsiders and even many Nigerians have spoken of the “Hausa-Fulani” as if it were a single tribe, a single culture, and a single identity. This misunderstanding hides the truth of what is happening in Northern Nigeria today, especially in the North-West where Hausa communities have faced waves of attacks, kidnappings, and destruction.

To understand the crisis, the world must first understand something very simple but very important:

Hausa and Fulani are not the same people.

Their cultures are not the same.

Their social values are not the same.

And their recent experiences are definitely not the same.

1. The Hausa Identity: A Culture Built on Restraint, Respect, and Peace

Across centuries, Hausa society has been known for:

- Hospitality
- Order and social discipline
- Deep respect for elders and process
- Conflict avoidance and diplomacy
- Urban civilization centered on trade, scholarship, and artisanal work

A typical Hausa upbringing emphasizes humility, patience, calmness, and avoidance of violence. Growing up in Hausa towns, children are taught:

***“Ka ji tsoron Allah, ka girmama mutane.
Be mindful God. Do not harm others.”***

This cultural foundation is so strong that many people raised in Hausa environments find it shocking to imagine a Hausa person initiating tribal, religious, or communal attacks. Historically, Hausa communities resorted to leadership councils, mediation, and negotiation not militia violence.

No society is perfect, but the Hausa cultural character is widely recognized as gentle, dignified, and orderly. People from outside the region often remark on how peaceful Hausa-dominated cities are, even amid national tension.



2. The Fulani Identity: Different Origins, Different Structure, Different History

The Fulani, historically pastoralists and later political elites in many northern states, have a very different heritage. Their spread across West Africa and their leadership in the Sokoto Caliphate placed them in positions of authority over territories that were already culturally Hausa.

This historical background matters today because:

- Fulani elites have dominated power structures in the North for over a century.
- Many state governors, emirs, and high-ranking officials are Fulani.
- Policy direction and security decisions often originate from Fulani-led institutions.

This political dominance is a major reason Hausa communities feel frustrated when they are told:

"Fulani only react violently because government has treated them unjustly."

The immediate question becomes:

Which government?

The same government largely led by Fulani elites?

This contradiction is one of the greatest sources of confusion and resentment.



3. The Reality: Hausa Communities Are the Primary Victims of the Violence in the North-West

Over the past several years, towns and villages across Hausa-majority states Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto, Kaduna, Niger have faced:

- Mass kidnappings
- Attacks on markets and farmlands
- Destruction of villages
- Loss of life
- Displacement of families

These are not abstract ideas. These are real events affecting real Hausa families.

Children can no longer walk freely. Farmers cannot go to their fields. Entire communities live in fear.

When this violence spread, **Hausa elders and leaders raised the alarm**, asking Fulani leaders to intervene, to call their communities to order, to acknowledge what was happening.

But what many Hausa people received instead were explanations such as:

- “The attackers are reacting to discrimination.”
- “The government has marginalized the Fulani.”
- “This violence is a response to injustice.”

And this is where the Hausa community feels deeply misunderstood.



4. The Hausa Perspective: “We Are the Ones Being Attacked, So How Are We the Problem?”

From the viewpoint of people living in these communities:

- They are the victims.
- Their villages are the ones under siege.
- Their children are the ones being kidnapped.
- Their farms are the ones being destroyed.

So when they hear:

“Fulani are only reacting to oppression,”

the question becomes simple and logical:

Oppression from whom?

Hausa villagers farming their land?

Or the same Fulani political elite dominating the region?

The narrative simply does not match the lived reality of Hausa communities.

This is why many Hausa people feel silenced, ignored, or gaslighted.

Their suffering is visible.

Their grief is real.

But their story is hidden beneath political narratives that do not reflect the facts on the ground.



5. Why the World Has Failed to Understand the Problem

The biggest cause of global misunderstanding is the term "**Hausa-Fulani.**"

It creates the illusion of unity, sameness, and equal responsibility.

But in reality:

- Hausa communities are the ones being attacked.
- Fulani-led political structures dominate governance.
- Armed groups causing chaos are often mapped to pastoralist networks.
- Yet, outsiders believe both groups are one because the name merges them.

This merging hides the truth and prevents external observers from recognizing the distinct experiences of the two groups.

6. What Hausa People Want the World to Understand

1. “We are peaceful by culture and by upbringing.”

Violence is not in the character or social training of Hausa society.

2. “We are suffering, not causing suffering.”

The attacks are happening in Hausa villages, not in Fulani towns.

3. “We are not the government.”

Hausa villagers have no influence on state power; they are everyday people trying to survive.

4. “Stop blaming the victims.”

Excuses that portray attackers as oppressed only silence the real victims.

5. “Recognize the difference between Hausa and Fulani.”

Until the world stops combining both groups, the real issues will remain hidden.

7. A Path Forward: Truth Before Peace

Northern Nigeria cannot heal unless its realities are acknowledged without distortion:

- Hausa and Fulani are different peoples.
- Their histories and identities are distinct.
- One community is disproportionately affected by violence.
- Political narratives must not overshadow the pain of ordinary civilians.
- Accountability must be based on actions, not ethnic identity.

Only when these truths are recognized can meaningful dialogue, justice, and peace begin.

Conclusion

Understanding Northern Nigeria Begins With Listening to the Hausa People

For too long, the world has misunderstood the North because it has misunderstood the relationship between Hausa and Fulani. The illusion of a single “Hausa–Fulani” identity has prevented outsiders from seeing who is suffering, who is speaking out, and who is crying for help.

The Hausa people are not violent.
They are not aggressors.
They are not the cause of the crisis.

They are a peaceful community caught in a storm they did not create.

And the world needs to hear their story clearly, truthfully, and without distortion.

A photograph of a woman wearing a dark headscarf and a patterned shawl, holding a small child close to her chest. Another child sits on the ground to her left, looking towards the camera. The background is a simple, possibly outdoor setting with some wooden structures.

THANK YOU FOR READING!

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